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A FUNERAL
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the
D E A T H

OF THE REVEREND

Mr. *JAMES READ*;

WHO DIED,

AUGUST 16. 1755. in the Seventy-
first Year of his Age.

PREACHED AT

New Broad-Street, Petty-France, London,
August 24. 1755. *H*

By *GEORGE BENSON*, D.D.

Published at the desire of the congregation.

L O N D O N:

Printed and Sold by J. WAUGH, and W. FENNER,
in *Lombard-street*; and J. NOON, *Cheapside*.

[Price Six-pence.]



2 Cor. v. 4.

For we, that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burthened. Not for that we would be unclothed, but cloathed upon; that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

ST. PAUL met with many difficulties and discouragements, in this world. But his support, under all, was, that he, who had raised up *the lord Jesus* to an happy immortality, would also raise him up, by *Jesus*, and so render him happy for ever^a. For that excellent reason, he fainted not. For, though his body, his outward man, perished; yet his mind, his inward man, was daily renewed, and increased in vigor. For our light affliction, (sais he) *which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more excedeing, and eternal, weight of glory. Whilest we look, not at the things, which are seen; for they are temporal: but at the things, which are unseen; for they are eternal.*

A 2

In

^a Chap. iv. 14, &c.

In treating of these words, I would *first* explain the text, and context. And, then, make such observations as they may afford. As to the *first*; namely, to explain the text, and context.—Suppose any one had inquired of St. Paul, “Why do you mind distant and
 “unseen things; and expose yourself so
 “much to inconveniences and sufferings,
 “in this world? How can you tell, when
 “the body is dissolved, and the man dies,
 “but that there is an intire end of him?
 “And if so; you forego present ease and in-
 “joyment, and have nothing in prospect, to
 “counterbalance such calamities?”

To such inquiries, the apostle answers, in the begining of this chapter: *For we know,* (that is, by a well-attested divine revelation,) *that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of GOD; an house, not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.* Some critics have thought the word, translated *tabernacle*, signifies *the human body*, properly, and not metaphorically ^b. But it's primary signification is, *a tent*, or *tabernacle*. Indeed, it was so commonly used for the human body, that, in length of time, it came to be so used, where there could be no allusion to the primary meaning of the word.—And St. Paul hath, with great propriety and beauty, called the body of man, *a tabernacle*. It is not *an house*, a firm, fixed building;

^b See Bishop Pearce his note on Longinus, 4to. p. 102.

ing; likely to stand for ages: but may be justly compared to a *tent*; a structure, comparatively light and weak; that is easily moved, or soon taken down. Such is our earthly habitation, or bodily tabernacle!

It may, to some, seem a pretty strange way of joining ideas, to say, *our earthly house of this tabernacle*; and yet immediately talk, “of putting it off, like a garment: and, after that, to have another cœlestial house put on, instead of it; or the cœlestial house put over it, as men put one garment over another.” But, as to this, I would observe, that, though it may seem a strange way of speaking to us, yet, among the eastern people, every sort of covering used, sometimes, to be called *an house*. Thus they called a quiver, *the house of an arrow*; a bag to put books in, *a book-house^c*; a glove, *the house of the hand^d*. In like manner; the human body is considered, as a covering, in general, when the apostle speaks of putting it off; though, according to the eastern phraseology, he had, just before, called it *an house*, or a *tabernacle*.

Such is the brittle state of man upon earth, that his body is like a building, which is easily thrown down, or soon comes to decay. And, therefore, it is said, *Men dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust*. And
St.

See the syriac version, 2 Tim. iv. 13.

^a See Fagius on Gen. i. 10.

St. *Paul*, elsewhere, expressed the frail and brittle state of man, by another figure, when he represented the treasure of the gospel, as put into earthen vessels; vessels, that would soon be dashed in pieces. But, though these bodies of ours, in the present state, these houses of clay, will soon moulder away, and fall into decay and ruine; yet we are sure of a building of a nobler kind and order, *an house not made with hands*; not liable to decay, as are all the houses built by the hands of men: but it will be *a building of GOD*; a spiritual body, not produced according to the present course of nature; but immediately formed by our lord Jesus Christ: and worthy of such a manner of production. For it will be of *eternal* duration, and the happy place of it's residence will be *in the heavens*.

There are four terms, which ought carefully to be explained, that the text and context may be clearly understood; namely, *naked, uncloathed, cloathed, and cloathed upon*^e. The original words are different, and
signifie

^e ' The [*jewish*] priests, when they were come up,
' [*to Jerusalem,*] to the service [*of the temple,*] put off
' their ordinary wearing cloathes, washed themselves in
' water, and put on the holy garments. [See Lev. viii.
' 6, &c.] yea, whilest they were at the temple, and
' attending there, on the service, any of them, that
' would sleep by night, he slept not in the holy garments,
' but in his own wearing-cloathes. And, in
' the morning, when he was to go to his service, he
put

signifie different things. By [*cloathed^f*] St. Paul meant the soul's being in the body; or haveing the body upon it, like a covering, or garment. By [*uncloathed^e*] he denoted the soul's being stripped, or devested, of the body. And, by [*naked^h*,] the state, or condition, of the soul, when devested of the body. In which, our apostle, speaks exactly in the language of *Plato*, who said, "that liveing men are cloathed with bodies; but the dead are *naked*." And lastly, by [*cloathed uponⁱ*,] St. Paul meant the haveing a vestment of glory, or a cœlestial garment, thrown over his body, or superinduced upon it.

Under the various calamities of this life, the apostle meditated so much upon an happy immortality, that his mind was fired, and transported, with the glorious prospect. And, when he was warmed with the thought, it made him long for the thrice happy time, when that felicity would commence. Ver. 2. *For we, that are in this bodily tabernacle, do groan; desireing to be cloathed upon, with our house,*

' put off his own cloathes, bathed himself in water, and put on the garments of the priesthood. These expressions in scripture, *Put off the old man, and be renewed; and put on the new man.* Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24. *Put on the lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. xiii. 14. *baptized into Christ, and putting on Christ.* Gal. iii. 27. *washed from our sins, and made priests.* Rev. i. 5, 6. *not uncloathed, but cloathed upon.* 2 Cor. v. 4. seem to allude to this custom.' [See *Lightfoot's Works*, vol. i. p. 1150.]

^f ἑνδύσασθαι, ^e ἐκδύσασθαι, ^h γυμνοί, ⁱ ἐπενδύσασθαι.

house, which is from heaven. The various afflictions of this mortal state caused the *apostles*, as well as other *christians*, to long for that vestment of glory, which they are to receive, at the resurrection of the just; which they could have wished to have had *superinduced*; and, thereupon, have had such a change granted them, as passed upon *Enoch* and *Elijah*, when they were rendered immortal, without dying; or such a change, as shall be granted unto the saints, who shall be found alive, upon this earth, at Christ's second coming. For, in his former epistle, St. Paul had assured the *Corinthians*, that *we shall not all sleep* the sleep of death; *but that the last generation shall be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, and so be rendered immortal, without dying; and join those, who are raised to immortal happiness^k.

The third verse, in our common english translation, runs thus, *If so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked.* But it does not seem an easie matter to make any sense of these words, "For, if we be *cloathed*, how is it possible that we should be found *naked*?" To take away this difficulty, some would introduce a different reading, and render the words thus, *Although, if we be unclothed, we shall not be found naked.* But that seems to me, to make the matter as bad, if not worse. For, if they were *un-*
cloathed,

^k 1 Cor. xy. 51, 52.

cloathed, they must needs *be found naked*. I am, therefore, for retaining the present reading; and would have onely a small alteration made, in our *english version*; and render the words thus, *seeing that then we shall be found cloathed, and not naked*: that is, the *apostle* expresseth the same thought, both negatively and positively; that he might expresse it with more strength and vehemence. *As if he had said*, "For I, in this body, "groan, and lament; desireing to be cloathed "ed upon, with my vestiment of glory; or, "without dying, to have the house, which "is from heaven, superinduced, upon this "terrestrial, mortal body. And this I desire, in so earnest and fervent a manner; "seeing that then I shall be found *cloathed*; " (which I of all things long for;) and not " *naked*, not forced to put off the body by "death, which is the state I do not so much "desire; or from which, if it so pleased "GOD, I should be most glad to escape."

St. Paul might well desire that vestiment of glory; as it is to be the lot of none, but the righteous and happy. For, though the scripture is clear and expresse in it, that the wicked shall all be raised from the dead; yet it is no where intimated, that their bodies shall be cloathed with a glory. And we may farther observe, that the house (or covering) from heaven, which the saints are to receive, at the last day, is never once

called *a body*. No! the saints, when raised again, are to have but one body; that is, the present body, new modelled, and covered with a garment of glory; which is to render it immortal, or rather be the badge of it's immortality. It is most natural to wish for an intire exemption from death; (as the *apostle* seems here to have done;) and to prefer an immediate entrance upon the highest felicity; to going through the pains of death; the body's lying in the grave; and, after it is corrupted, rising again; and so attaining to that glory.

The apostle goes on, in our text; *For we, that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burtbened.* “ We are pressed down, with the
 “ weight of the various troubles and afflictions of this life; and groan to be delivered from them. But, when we compare
 “ death, and the dismal mansions of the grave;
 “ or the state immediately after death; with
 “ that, which is to commence, at the resurrection of the just; — we should, of the
 “ two, much rather choose, not to go
 “ through the pangs and agonies of dying;
 “ not to visit the gloomy mansions of the
 “ grave. *For we do not desire to be unclothed*; [or to put off these mortal bodies,
 “ that they may see corruption;] *but to be clothed upon, with our vestment of glory,*
 “ *which is from heaven; that so our earthly*
 “ body

for Mr. JAMES READ.

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“ body may be directly immortalized, or
“ *mortality swallowed up of life.*”

His enemies would, very probably, be for insulting him, and saying, “ How do you
“ know, that you shall have such a glorious
“ change passe upon you ?” To such a quæstion, the *apostle* answers, *He, who hath wrought me to this self same thing, is GOD.* It is GOD, who hath set before me this glorious prospect, and taught me how to prepare for it. It is he, who hath kindled this desire of immortality in me ; and given me reason to hope for it’s being, in due time, accomplished. *And, as a pledge and earnest, that I shall actually obtain it, he hath given me the spirit.*—The *jews* had put to death the lord of life and glory. The *gentiles* had forsaken the true GOD, and worshiped *idols*. And they had, both of them, been, in general, excedeing wicked. It was, therefore, highly proper, that GOD should give them *both*, some pledge of their sin’s being forgiven, and some assurance of a resurrection to an happy immortality. For guilty minds are apt to entertain endlesse jealousies and suspicions. Now ; this assurance did GOD vouchsafe to give them, by conferring upon them the miraculous gifts of the *spirit*. And this is often spoken of, as the earnest of their future inheritance, and the pledge of their adoption and immortality. *For all the promises of GOD in him, [that is ; in Christ Jesus,] are*

yea and amen, [or, they are sure, and may be depended upon ;] unto the glory of GOD ; [as they are published] by us. Now he, who confirmeth us, together with you, in Christ ; and hath anointed us, is GOD ; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the spirit, in our hearts¹. And, accordingly, it is said that, as many, as are led by the spirit of GOD, they are the sons of GOD. For you have not received the spirit of bondage, again, unto fear ; [that is, while you were idolatrous heathens, you had the spirit of bondage, which created fear ; or were, thro' fear of death, all that part of your life-time, subject to bondage ; as being afraid that death was an utter extinction of the whole man ; or as haveing no hope of a resurrection to a glorious and happy immortality. But, since you became christians, you have not received that spirit of bondage, to hold you under such inflaveing fears ;] but you have received the spirit of adoption, by which we cry, ABBA, FATHER ; or which teacheth us to look upon GOD, as a kind, indulgent father ; who will raise us from the dead, and make us perfectly happy for-ever. The spirit itself beareth witnesse with [or, to] our spirit, that we are the children of GOD. And, if children, then heirs ; heirs of GOD, and co-heirs with Christ ; seeing we now suffer with him ; that we may be hereafter, also, glorified together

¹ 2 Cor. i. 20, &c.

together with him^m. And of other gentile christians, it is said, that, when *they heard the gospel, and believed, they were sealed with the holy spirit of promise. Which* (says the apostle) *is the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possessionⁿ; — or (as the words might have been rendered) unto the redemption of life^o; which is elsewhere called, the redemption of our body^p. And they are cautioned not to grieve the holy spirit, whereby they were sealed unto the day of their redemption^q.*

As they had the *spirit*, that glorious evidence of the gospel in general, and of their own title to an happy immortality; *Therefore* (says the apostle, ver. 6, &c.) *we are always confident*; [it would have been a more proper and more decent translation, if it had been rendered, *Therefore, we are always undaunted, or of good courage*;] *knowing that, whilest we dwell in the body, we are absent from the lord, or dwell at a distance from him. The fortitude, or courage, of which he is here speaking, was, that he went on, undauntedly, in his great work, as apostle of the gentiles*; did not faint nor flag, notwithstanding the many difficulties and great opposition, which he met with. Nothing could

^m Rom. viii. 14, &c.

ⁿ Eph. i. 13, 14.

^o Ἐκ ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, [See Dr. Whitby on Eph. i. 14.]

^p Rom. viii. 23.

^q Eph. iv. 30.

could tempt him to act insincerely, like the false apostle; or to conceal the great truths of the gospel, in order to please men. For he knew, his reward was laid up with *Jesus*; and *he walked by faith, and not by sight*. He regulated his conduct, not with a regard to the things of the present, visible world; but by the hopes, and desires, of the invisible things of the glorious world to come. He, therefore, was undaunted; and, in his own choice, preferred quitting the body, that he might get home to his lord. However; he made it his great endeavor, whether he lived a longer or shorter time, upon earth; whether in the body, or out of it, to be acceptable unto Christ; considering him, as the great and universal judge, who will finally render unto every one according to his deeds.

Thus (I hope) you have had a just view of *St. Paul's* principal design in this place.

The *second* thing proposed, was, to make such observations, as the text and context, thus explained, may afford.

And, from what has been said, we may observe, (1.) “The calamities of the present life do, sometimes, make even good men to groan, and lament their unhappy condition. *We, that are in the body*, (says the apostle) *do groan, being burthened.*”

It has been an old complaint, that *few and evil are the days of the years of our pilgrimage, here upon earth*. We come into the world weeping;

weeping ; and die, generally, in pangs and agonies. And the intermediate space has many troubles. We need not inquire into the hardships of miserable and unhappy slaves ; who serve peevish, cruel, and tyrannical masters, that have put off all humanity and bowels of compassion. We need not go into the infernal dungeons of the inquisition, and take a view of the racks and tortures, the incessant sighs and piercing groans, of which those walls are conscious. In common life, and in this land of liberty and plenty, some are in such narrow circumstances, that they know not how to live ; and others are so rich, that they are in continual solicitude, how to passe away their time, in the most idle amusements, and endlesse diversions ; or how to preserve what they already have ; or perhaps to hoard up more, though to the ruine of their children, or friends ; to whom they leave little or nothing to do, but to spend what they have scraped together ; and which they generally do, in the most extravagant and ridiculous manner. Some are disturbed in their minds. Others have but very little health of body ; and others again meet with great losses, and very grievous disappointments ; or are almost overwhelmed with pressing difficulties, and exquisite perplexities. Some grieve, because their children have proved wicked, blasted all their hopes and kind wishes, and involved them in endlesse

lesse distresse, and unspeakable anguish. And others are bowed down, and go mourning, all their days; because they have lost those, upon whom a great part of their comfort and happineſſe, in this life, depended.—In ſhort; we are, all of us, liable to many miſeries, which we can neither foreſee, nor prevent; or which, when they are come, we cannot redreſſe. We are full of wants, which we cannot provide for; and preſſed with deſires, which we cannot gratifie. We are compaſſed with evils, which we cannot remove; and obnoxious to dangers and accidents, againſt which the moſt potent, and the wiſeſt, of mankind, cannot guard. We are ſecure of no external poſſeſſion, which we already enjoy; and intirely uncertain, whether we can obtain any thing, for which we wiſh, or hope. We are excedeing apt to grieve for what we cannot help, and to deſire what we cannot have^r. And man, in this view, ſeems to walk in a vane ſhow, and the human race to be given away to vanity.

This is ſtrongly and beautifully expreſſed, in the apocryphal book of *Ecclus*. *Great travel is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the ſons of Adam; from the day, that they go out of their mother's womb, 'till the day that they return to [the earth,] the mother of all things. Their imagination of things*

^r See *Archbiſhop Tillotſon's Sermon on Job xxxviii. 28.*

things to come, and the day of death trouble their thoughts, and cause fear of heart ; from him that sitteth on a throne of glory, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes ; from him, that weareth purple and a crown, unto him, that is cloathed with a linen frock. Wrath and envy, trouble and unquietnesse, fear of death, and anger and strife. And, in the time of rest upon his bed, his night-sleep changeth his knowlege. A little, or nothing, is his rest. And, afterwards, he is in sleep, as in a day of keeping watch ; troubled in the visions of his heart, as if he was escaped out of battle. When all is safe, he waketh ; and marvelleth that the fear was nothing. Such things happen to all flesh, both man and beast ; and that is seven-fold more upon sinners ; death and blood-shed, strife and sword, calamities, famine, tribulation, and the scourge¹.

I would not aggravate the evils of this life ; nor call in quæstion the conduct of him, that appointed them. For I verily believe, that they are all wisely appointed of GOD, in this state of moral discipline, subservient to the best and noblest ends and purposes. But there are so many, and such great, distresses ; and such short intervals of real, unmixed felicity ; — that it is no wonder, even the best of men do, upon several occasions, groan, being burthened ; and are glad to steal

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¹ Ecclus'. xl. 1, &c.

out of a world, where perfect and uninterrupted happiness is not to be found,

(2.) Notwithstanding all the evils of this life, GOD hath so framed us, that we are naturally averse to dying; and had much rather have the celestial garment of glory superinduced; or be translated to heaven, without dying; than die, and rise again, and so come to that state of glory. *For we, that are in the body, do groan; being burthened. Not that we desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon; that so mortality might be swallowed up of life. And he, that hath wrought us to this self same thing, is GOD.* For GOD hath planted in us, the principle of self-preservation; and the strong, tenacious, love of life.

Such, indeed, are the distresses of some unhappy persons, that they lay violent hands upon themselves; and so strive to put an end to their calamities. But that is a very great folly, and wickedness, in persons, that have the use of their reason; and what can, by no means, be justified. For, as GOD is the author of life, and the great lord and master of us all, he hath a right to the disposal of us, and of all that concerns us. And we can none of us lawfully quit our present station, 'till the great master summon us hence^t.

—As

* ^t *Self-murder* was commended by *Pliny*, ep. 22. l. 1. and *passim*, and by others of the antients. But *Pythagoras*

—As to those, who have been deprived of the use of their reason; and, thereupon, led to destroy themselves; it is possible that, in them, it might be no crime at all: because it might be purely the effect of their disorder. But can a person, who has the use of his reason, hope to appear, with acceptance, before GOD, as his judge; after he hath murdered *himself*; when they, that murder others, are ranked among those, who shall never inherit the kingdom of GOD? Let us, therefore, every one of us, make the same noble resolution, with pious, patient, *Job*; how many, and how great, soever our afflictions, or temptations, are; *All the days of my appointed time, will I wait, 'till my change come!*

But the instances of those, that destroy themselves, are rare and unusual. And though, under the last head, I gave you a representation of the miseries of this life, by reason of which, good men do, sometimes, groan, being burthened: — yet I would not be

thagoras, Socrates, Plato, Tully, and others, condemned it. See Virg. Æn. VII. 434.

Arrian. Epictet. lib. 1. c. 9. p. 42. sub finem.] “ O men, wait for GOD. When he shall signify his mind, and dismiss you from this service; then depart unto him. But, at present, be ye patient; inhabiting this country, in which he hath placed you. Truly, the time, of your dwelling here, is but short; and it is easie to those, who are thus disposed in their minds.”

be understood to say, that *evil, at present, præponderates*. For I freely acknowledge that, take mankind in general, there is, among them, more happinesse than misery; even in the present life, and dureing their abode in the body. And that prævailing happinesse, together with the principle of self-præservacion, lead mankind to love this life; and that, sometimes, inordinately. The generality (we may easily observe) submit to the stroke of death, with great struggling and reluctance; and had rather part with any thing, than with *life*. They, of all things, dread the approach of that fatal hour, when they must bid a long, an everlasting, farewell, to their friends, possessions, temporal businesse, and all the delights of the sons of men. There is, something, so very formidable in death; something so excedeing gloomy, in the deep, damp grave; that the fear of them palls every earthly injoyment, and sickens every temporal comfort. It casts a dark shade over our brightest hours; and makes us more indifferent unto all the businesse, and the pleasures, of the sons of men.

(3.) The state, between death, and the resurrection, seems to be represented, as a state of consciounesse; and, to good men, a state of greater felicity, than the best estate here upon earth.

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Accordingly ; St. Paul, in the context, speaks, as *willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the lord*. And, elsewhere, he expresses the same thought, more strongly ; when he speaks of himself, as *having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better* than continuing in this life^u. Now ; it does not seem to me, that *being with Christ* can signify much, to one, that is not conscious ; or that falling into a state of utter insensibility, is *far better*, than continuing longer in this life.

However, I acknowledge, (4.) That the christian revelation, less frequently, speaks of the separate state ; but, in very many places, points forward to the resurrection ; and the state, consequent to that ; and represents our complete felicity, as commencing then ; and, from thenceforth, to indure forever.

The *earnest expectation of the* [christian, the new] *creature waiteth for the revelation of the sons of GOD. For the creature* [the christian, as well as the rest of mankind] *hath been rendered subject to vanity, [that is, to death, or mortality ;] not willingly, but by him, who hath subjected the same thereto, in consequence of the first transgression. However ; christians long for that happy time, when the children of GOD are to be reveled, in all their glory ; — in hope,*
that

^u Phil. i. 23.

*that they themselves, also, shall, then, be freed from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD. For we know that the whole creation [all the new creation, the christian world in general] groan, and travail together, in pangs, until this very time. And not onely they, [not onely christians in general;] but [apostles and superior prophets, who had the highest illumination, and the most extraordinary miraculous gifts:] we, (sais St. Paul) who have the first-fruits of the spirit; even we ourselves groan, within ourselves, waiting for the adoption; that is, the redemption of our bodies^x. The firm expectation of a glorious and happy immortality, is, to christians, a vast consolation, under the most gloomy prospect, and in times of the most exquisite distresse. Because they verily believe that, as surely as *Jesus* died, and rose again, so surely those, that sleep in *Jesus*, will GOD, at the last day, bring with him. Indeed, the saints, who shall be found alive, upon this earth, at Christ's second coming, shall have this peculiar felicity, that they shall not die at all, but shall be suddenly rendered immortal; and caught up, together with those that are raised, to perfect and endlesse happiness. This is a circumstance, which St. Paul hath touched upon, more briefly elsewhere^y. But he hath said it, most expressly,*

^x Rom. viii. 19, &c.

^y 1 Thes. iv. 17.

ly, in his first epistle to the Corinthians; — *Behold I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, upon the sound of the last trumpet. For the dead shall be raised incorruptible; and such of us, as are then alive, shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality; then, shall be brought to passe the saying that is writen, Death is swallowed up in victory*^z. — Now, as the *apostle* had said that, in his former letter to the church at *Corinth*, he here alludes to it; and sais that, though he groaned, under the burthen of the miseries of this life; yet he did not so much desire to die, as to have had the lot of the saints, in the last generation, or the cœlestial garment of glory, superinduced, upon his present body; *that so mortality might have been swallowed up of life; or that he might have been rendered immortal, without dying.*

(5.) Some have thought that the *apostles* expected Christ would come to the final judgement, in that age, and before they themselves dyed. But, as that was not true in itself, so I apprehend they knew the contrary^a.

St. Paul, long before the writeing of these

^z 1 Cor. xv. 51, &c.

^a See the paraphrase and notes on 1 Theff. iv. 15.

these *two epistles to the Corinthians*, had warned the christians, at *Thessalonica*, against such an apprehension. *We beseech you, brethren, (sais he) that you be not soon shaken in mind, nor disturbed; neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us; as if we had, by any of these ways, intimated that the day of the lord is at hand.* And then he goes on, to assure them that *that day would not come, 'till there had happened a grand apostasie; and the man of sin was revealed, who would make a gradual progresse; and, after that, come to a final destruction*^b. — And *St. John* prophesied, in the book of the *revelation*, of various revolutions, in the church, and in the world, for a long succession of ages. And, when all these things shall have happened; then, *Jesus Christ will come quickly; the dead, great and small, shall stand before him; and he will render, unto every one of them, according to their works.* — Now, by these intimations, we may be satisfied, that the *apostles* did not expect that Christ would come to judgement, in that age. And, as to *St. Paul's* words, in this place, they seem to mean no more, than that, of the two, he thought it a much more desirable thing to escape dying; and that, if he might have had his wish, he would have chosen, not to have put off this mortal body, but to have had the cœlestial glory
super-

superinduced, that so mortality might have been swallowed up of life.

(6. *Lastly.*) How should the prospect of a resurrection, to immortal glory and happiness, animate us to do all the duties of life; and inspire us, with patience, to bear all the calamities, which befall us? *Wherefore we labor, that, whether present, or absent, we may be accepted of him.*

We are *christians*! Let us manifest, that our faith is sincere, and has it's proper influence upon our tempers, and upon our lives. The man, that is pleased with the prospect of annihilation, or careless and indifferent about what befalls him, after death; is a poor, stupid, low-minded, groveling, wretch. But the believer, the true christian, who hath that wide and extended prospect, of a glorious and happy immortality, hath a large soul; and the noblest views, to fill and satisfy his large desires, and to render him perfectly and for-ever happy. The narrow-minded man, who hath his portion in this life, may use trick and artifice, or be determined, by a love of temporal pleasures, or the fear of temporal evils, to neglect his duty, and to practise what his conscience condemns. But he, that firmly believes a future state of recompence; and knows that vice, or wickedness, is not onely in itself base and deformed; but, in the wise constitution of GOD, leads to misery: and that

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virtue

virtue is a beautiful form ; wise and excellent in itself, and inseparably connected with happiness ; — such a man may deny himself of all sinful gratifications and pursuits whatever ; as knowing, that he, who raised up the *lord Jesus*, and exalted him to glory and happiness ; will also raise him up, and make him glorious and happy, together with *Jesus*. — This, the true christian doeth not look upon, as a matter of mere speculation ; as a dream, or curious, pleasing vision ; but it is, to him, a truth of the last importance ; a principle of action, by which he is led to be faithful, in all his conduct ; and patient, in all circumstances and conditions whatever. It is the belief of another life, and of a glorious resurrection to perfect and endless felicity, that comforts and supports the good man, under the loss of his dearest and most valuable friends ; that preserves him steady and constant, in the practice of every duty, whether of a moral or positive nature ; that raises his mind above the inordinate love of seen things, and renders him superior to the difficulties and discouragements of this state of trial. And, when he looks forward to a dying hour, and views the dark valley of the shadow of death ; and looks beyond that ; and sees, also, a resurrection to eternal life and happiness ; he is ready to break out, into that exulting song of victory and triumph, “ *O death, where is, now, thy sting ;*
“ *where-*

“ wherewith, like a scorpion, thou didest
 “ formerly wound, and slay mankind? O
 “ grave, where is, now, thy victory? since
 “ thou hast been forced to yield up all the
 “ dead; which have been, for such a long
 “ succession of ages, committed to thy
 “ custody? *The sting of death was sin.* It
 “ was *sin*, which brought *death* into the
 “ world; or which gave it a sting, mor-
 “ tally to wound mankind. *And the strength*
 “ *of sin was the law*, which condemned all
 “ transgressors to death, without mercy.
 “ But thanks be to GOD, who giveth us the
 “ victory over death, the last enemy, through
 “ our lord *Jesus Christ!*”

The CHARACTER.

I Suppose, it is expected of me, that I should say something, concerning your deceased pastor, *the reverend Mr. James Read*. He was borne, at *Kidderminster*, in *Worcestershire*, October 6, 1684. The pious and excellent *Richard Baxter* had worked such a reformation, in that town; that a sense of serious religion did, in consequence thereof, indure, for a long time. And some traces thereof are supposed to continue unto this day.

Mr. *Read*'s parents were among the pious inhabitants of that town. Their good exam-

ple, and instructions, together with the serious preaching of the late excellent Mr. *Spilisbury*, (father of Mr. *Spilisbury* of *Salter's-hall*,) had so good an influence, as to form the tender minds of their children to religious virtue. And, from observeing such a disposition in them, they were led to consecrate two of their sons to the work of the ministry^a. — After due præparation, at the grammar-school, they studied academical learning, under Dr. *Ker*, at *High-gate*; together with several, who have since been eminent, in the ministry, and in other stations.

In his academical studies, Mr. *James Read* was indefatigable; and made a considerable progresse. — After a liberal education, he was examined, and approved, by the *London* ministers. And then, spent a year or two, in preaching, in his native country. And was acceptable, and useful, where-ever he went.

Haveing given sufficient proofs of his ministerial abilities; — upon the recommendation of Mr. *Blackmoor*, then minister at *Worcester*, he was chosen assistant, at the *Weigh-house*, in *London*, *August* 4. 1707. where he was, for many years, an acceptable and useful preacher. — While he was in that situation, (*namely*, in the year 1719.) the unhappy

^a Our lately deceased friend was one. — The Revd. Mr. *Henry Read*, now of *Southwark*, was the other; who, in the year 1719, stood up, for the glorious cause of liberty, as well as his brother.

happy difference arose, about subscribing to human articles, as a test of orthodoxy. And Mr. *James Read* was one of the majority, who stood up for the glorious cause of liberty; and against all human impositions whatever. This occasioned some to dislike him. And *July 24. 1720.* the majority of that church, under the influence of their then very zealous pastor, thought fit to dismiss Mr. *James Read*, from ministring, any longer, among them. — At this distance of time, it will be very natural to inquire, “For what reason, did they so dismiss him?” And it is but justice to his memory, to say, “that they had nothing to object to his moral character, which was pure and spotlesse.” But they dismissed him, for two crimes, never to be forgiven: *namely*, (1.) Because he held the *scripture* alone, (and not any human articles, catechisms, creeds, or confessions of faith; but the *scripture* alone) as *the form of sound words*; or the onely test of christian faith and orthodoxy. (2.) He maintained a spirit of candor, moderation, and charity, towards those, who differed from him. And, particularly, would not say, “that he thought them guilty of *idolatry*, or that they had forfeited their claim to christian communion, who pay religious worship to *our lord Jesus Christ*, the onely mediator between GOD and *man*; though they hold him to be subordinate to his father; or (as Christ himself

“himself has told us) that *the father is greater than he.*”

I have no inclination to revive that controversy; neither is there any occasion for it. The subject has been sufficiently canvassed, to the spreading of truth; and (I would willingly hope) to the advancement of christian moderation and charity.

But permit me, briefly to apologize, for my dear, deceased brother; and to say, that he seems to have had, on his side, both *reason* and *scripture*, the *old testament* and the *new*. For *right reason* would direct every man, to seek for reveled truth, in the original revelation itself; and to look upon that, as the standard of the true faith, and the test of orthodoxy. Accordingly; in the *scripture*, (which always agrees with *right reason*) we find one of the old testament prophets directs, *To the law, and to the testimony*: and adds, *If men speak not according to this word; it is, because there is no light in them*^b. The apostle *Paul*, also, in the *new testament*, gave this direction, to that dearly beloved minister, the evangelist, *Timothy*, “Hold fast *the form of sound words*, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus^c.” By which, I suppose, he could scarcely mean, any human articles, catechisms, creeds, or confessions of faith, made, several hundreds of years,

^b Isaiah viii. 20.

^c 2 Tim. i. 13.

years, afterwards: but *the wholesome words, the words of our lord Jesus Christ, or of his holy and inspired apostles; which are, unquestionably, the form of sound words; and which expresse, in the most exact and proper manner, the pure, uncorrupted, christian doctrine.*

As to a spirit of candor, moderation, and charity, towards persons of different sentiments, one would think, nothing need be said, in vindication of it. Weak and fallible men, who are, themselves, so very liable to error and mistake, and who have so much need of candor to be exercised towards them, may easily see the reasonableness of exercising charity towards others. The *scripture*, also, assures us, that, "*of faith, hope, and charity, these three christian virtues, the greatest of these, is not faith, but charity.*" So it was formerly, and in the opinion of *St. Paul*. And, I suppose, there has not since, in the christian church, risen up, a better authority.

But, among *protestants*, and especially among *dissenters*, who live, and breathe, upon *toleration* and *liberty*; whose very fundamental principles are, *The sufficiency of the scriptures*, and *The liberty of private judgement*; one would suppose, there could be no great occasion for pleading for these principles. Least of all, in this church; which, soon after his dismissal from the *weigh-house*;

house; namely, December 22. 1720. chose Mr. *James Read*, assistant to their pastor, the late reverend Dr. *Evans*: and that with the doctor's hearty concurrence and approbation. After which, nothing more need be said, in vindication of our deceased friend; except it be, that all the members of the church, which dismissed him, from his former station, were not unanimous, in that dismissal. But (to their honor, be it mentioned) there were some persons, of good sense, and worthy characters, who stood by Mr. *Read*, in the time of his greatest distresse; came away with him, to this church; and steddily adhered to him, as long as he and they lived.

Moreover; after, the decease of Dr. *Evans*^d, this church chose Mr. *James Read*, as one of their pastors. And, about three months after, they chose their present surviveing pastor, the reverend Dr. *Allen*, to be his colleague. Which has been the situation of this church, for above twenty years.

The conduct of our deceased friend did then, and may, possibly, now, appear, in a different light, to different persons. But what could a man of a naturally timorous, cautious

^d The reverend *John Evans*, D. D. died, May 16, 1730. in the 51st year of his age. And his funeral sermon was preached by Dr. *Harris*.

cautious temper, as he was, propose to himself, in maintaining the glorious cause of liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgement, in the face of popular clamor, and amidst fierce opposition, and much ill treatment, from persons of power and great influence? A man of a worldly temper will swim with the stream. But the honest man, alone, will risque his future usefulness, and even his subsistence in the world; to adhere to what he takes to be the cause of truth; and in the steady practice of what his conscience directs him to, as his duty. Nothing, but the love and fear of GOD, honesty and true goodness of heart, could, one would think, lead a man to such a conduct. His support must be, the prospect of the recompence of the invisible world. And he must look for his reward, from GOD, and not from *men*.

Another part of Mr. *James Read's* character, was, that he was diligent in his studies; and acquired a considerable degree of knowlege, of various kinds. But his favorite study was *the holy scripture*; in which, he spent much time, and took great pleasure.

He was very laborious, in preaching, both in his own place, and for his brethren, while his health and strength continued; usually preaching twice, every lord's day:

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and, not feldom, three times. And, frequently, also, on other days^c.

His preaching was, like his life and manners, serious, plane, practical, honest, and faithful: usually turning upon subjects of the greatest importance. He seldom went, directly, into points of controverſie; yet, openly, vindicated uncorrupted christianity; and gave what he took to be the true, scripture doctrine: earnestly recommending that *charity*, of which he himself was so bright an example.

He was reckoned a person of great integrity, as well as remarkable prudence. Towards his relations and friends, steady, kind, and affectionate. He regularly visited his people, while he was able. And he never visited them, in the most common way, without some useful and friendly admonitions; which he could introduce, in an easie and natural manner. And such discourse came, with a better grace, from him; as he was, to his people, *a pattern in all things*. He was ready to give good counsel, to persons in difficulties. And he assisted the poor, with
his

^c Mr. *James Read* never published any thing, but *one sermon*, from John iv. 24. which was preached, December 14. 1729. upon opening the new meeting-place, in *new broad-street, Petty-france, London*. N.B. It was published, along with two sermons of Dr. *Evans's*, on the same occasion.

his purse, with his prayers, and with his best advice. He was faithful, in reproveing those that were blame-worthy; and had great compassion for persons in affliction and distresse.

Many years ago, he had a severe fever; which very much shattered his frame, and broke an excellent constitution. But he loved his great master's work: and persevered in it, as long as he was able. However; his growing disorders put a stop to his usual labors. And, for about three years, he has seldom appeared, among you, in this place. *Being in this tabernacle, he groaned, being burthened. Not that he desired to be unclothed, but clothed upon: that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* He bore his many afflictions, with a becoming resignation; and was convinced of the wisdom, and goodnesse, of him, that governs all.

In the evening of his days, he reviewed his former life, and greatly rejoiced that he had steddily adhered to the ways of GOD; and that his habitual conduct had been such, as his own mind could approve. He was neither depressed with desponding fear, nor elated with rapturous joy: but had good hope of happinesse, in the future state; founded on the essential goodnesse of GOD; and the rich grace, discovered in the gospel
of

of Christ. He had *the testimony of his own conscience* to his sincere compliance with the terms of the gospel, through that divine assistance, which had been graciously afforded him. In this way, he looked for *the blessed hope*, even the glorious appearance of *our lord Jesus Christ*, unto the salvation of all such as have loved and obeyed him.

To sum up all. “ He feared GOD
 “ from his childhood; and walked humbly,
 “ before him, all his days. He was a faithful,
 “ laborious minister, inviolably attached
 “ to the cause of christian truth, and the
 “ liberty of private judgement^f. He had
 “ no creed, but the *holy scripture*; was a
 “ lover of good men, of all denominations;
 “ a great

^f Mr. *James Read* was ordained, December 19, 1716. at Mr. *Simon Browne's* place, in the old *Jury*, London.

At the same time, there were ordained, four more; namely, his brother Mr. *Henry Read*, Mr. *Richard Bisco*, Mr. *George Smyth*, and Mr. (now Doctor) *Samuel Chandler*.

The ordainers were, Dr. *Oldfield*, Dr. *Calamy*, Mr. *Tong*, Mr. *Benjamin Robinson*, Mr. *Thomas Reynolds*, Mr. *Jeremiah Smith*, Mr. *Simon Browne*, Dr. *Evans*, and Dr. *Harris*. Mr. *Thomas Reynolds* asked Mr. *James Read* the usual questions, took the confession of his faith, and prayed over him. — Mr. *Benjamin Robinson* preached; and Dr. *Calamy* gave the charge: Mr. *Browne* began with prayer, and reading some portions of the scripture, suited to the occasion. Dr. *Harris* closed with prayer. And there are some, who still remember it to have been a very solemn day.

“ a great friend and patron to young ministers; of an inoffensive, peaceable, courteous, temper, and behavior; ready to do good, and communicate, even beyond his abilities. And therefore, generally, esteemed and beloved. After a life of distinguished integrity, great labor, and patient suffering, he died, in a good old age; acknowledging his own imperfections; and looking for *the mercy of our lord Jesus Christ, unto everlasting life.*”

You, my dear friends, of this church, have been witnesses; and GOD, also, was witness, how holily, justly, and unblameably, he behaved himself, among you. As you know, how he comforted, and charged, every one of you, (as a father does his children) that you should walk worthy of GOD, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. And I would willingly hope, that he, being dead, will still continue to speak among you: that you will recollect what was excellent in his example; and remember, and profit by, his instructions. You stand accountable to GOD, for the advantages, which you have, for so many years, enjoyed. And your deceased pastor greatly longed for your everlasting salvation. GOD grant that you may, all of you, be his glory, and joy, and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of the judge, at the last day!

Yea;

Yea; let all of us take care to profit, by the holy lives, and affecting deaths, of our dear friends. Time is hurrying us along, with it's rapid stream. And our dying moments make speedy advances. And, upon this fleeting, momentary life, *eternity* is depending. If, by the death of our friends, we are quickened in our pace; and admonished to be, also, ready. If we are in earnest, in the pursuit of eternal life. If we are, what we profess to be, good *men*, and good *christians*; all is well. We may, then, hope to meet our dear friends again, in better climes, and in a happier state; where none of the troubles of this world can reach us any more; where persecution and uncharitableness never enter; where the righteous, of all ages and nations, shall make up one glorious and happy assembly; where pleasure flows in full streams; where misery shall not be mingled with the joy; where pain and disease, sickness and decay, are never known; and where death, the king of terrors, shall have place no more.

And may GOD, through *Jesus Christ*, grant us, all, an abundant entrance into that glorious, happy, and everlasting world. Amen!

The E N D.

E R R A T A.

P. 5. before the first note, at the bottom, put the letter [c] p. 11. l. last, after [GOD] put a comma.

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